SPENSER'S COSMIC PHILOSOPHY AND HIS RELIGION

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NEW YORK 1929

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IN SPITE of the fact that Spenser, less than three years befor his death, published *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* and *An Hymne of Heavenly Love*, which show a mixture of strongly Christian elements with Platonic idealism, there has been a tendency of late to classify Spenser as pre-eminently pagan, or even atheistic. A moderate view is that of Denis Saurat, who, in his "Les idées philosophiques de Spenser,"[1] concludes that religion was necessary to Spenser's temperament but impossible to his intellect. He credits Spenser with no systematic cosmogony or reasoned agnosticism; and, though he quotes Professor Greenlaw on Spenser's interest in contemporary scientific thought, he does not seem inclined to rate it so highly. Spenser, as Saurat depicts him, is by temperament a pagan: though he has a sincere desire for religious faith, he has at the same time an intellectual inability to believe.

Professor Greenlaw, in a series of articles on Spenser's religion and cosmic philosophy,[2] goes much further in denying his religious faith. It is chiefly with reference to the opinions there expressed that I propose to re-examine Spenser's views on the universe, the creation of the world and of vegetable and animal life, the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and the relations of God to the universe.

The passages in Spenser's works chiefly concerned with these topics are:

1. The two early hymns, *An Hymne in Honour of Love*, and *An Hymne in Honour of Beautie*. Spenser refers to these, in the dedication of his *Fowre Hymnes* (1596), as composed in the "greener times" of his youth.

2. The "Mutability" cantos, usually printed after Book VI of *The Faerie Queene* as if they were a fragment of a projected later book. These cantos, according to the conclusions which I have presented elsewhere,[3] were written as early as 1579–80 but were

[1] Yearbook of the New Society of Letters at Lund, 1924-25.

[2] Edwin Greenlaw, "Spenser's Influence on Paradise Lost," *Studies in Philology*, XVII (1920), 320–59; "Spenser and Lucretius," *Ibid.*, 439 ff.; and "Some Old Religious Cults," *Ibid.*, XX (1923), 216 ff.

[3] "Spenser's Reasons for Rejecting the Mutability Cantos," *Stud. in Philol.*, April, 1928. An objection to my dating of these cantos is made by H. M. Belden,

abandoned after being harshly criticised by Harvey and other friends to whom he read them.

3. The Garden of Adonis passage (*Faerie Queene*, Bk. III, canto vi), published in 1590. This was certainly written before December 1, 1589, and, in my opinion, after the Mutability cantos.

4. *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, lines 799–883. The dedication is dated December 27, 1591. The material of the passage is akin to part of the Garden of Adonis, and the point of view is similar. This passage, which is not discussed by Professor Greenlaw, affords evidence of some importance that Spenser derived his cosmogony from a source quite other than Lucretius.

5. The proem to *The Faerie Queene*, Book V, written before November 19, 1594. Like the Garden of Adonis passage, it contains ideas from the abandoned "Mutability."[4]

6. *An Hymne of Heavenly Love*, and *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, dedicated September 1, 1596. So far as we now know, these were Spenser's latest poems, and they may fairly be regarded as constituting the summit of Spenser's philosophical and religious development, the final stage in his spiritual growth.

The usual chronology places "Mutability" after *The Faerie Queene*, but Professor Greenlaw goes still further and dates it after the last two hymns. According to his interpretation, "Mutability" marks a fall from their lofty idealism and inspired faith to an entirely materialistic philosophy, a state of scientific doubt, and a denial of God and of immortality of the soul. Not only that: the very Heavens which have so magnificently declared the handiwork of God suddenly must tell another tale—that there is no God at all. Such a fundamental relapse from Spenser's religious exaltation within two years and four months of his death would seem to call for more than Irish troubles or a sudden interest in science to account for it. The Irish troubles were an old story; and in Spenser's last years in Ireland there is nothing whatever to suggest that a passion for science suddenly developed.

In my opinion no such lapse occurred; Spenser was never an

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in "Alanus de Insulis, Giles Fletcher, and the 'Mutabilitie' Cantos," *Stud. in Philol.*, XXVI (1929), pp. 142–44; but the passages in "Mutability" which he quotes are from an obviously patched-in addition, which may be as late as 1589. A later date than 1589 is not required for the passage quoted from *Colin Clout*, as I shall show in a reply to Mr. Belden's objections.

[4] Book V, I think, may replace what the Mutability cantos were once designed for, but with more pointed reference to individual policies in Ireland.

atheist, nor a reasoned agnostic. There is, indeed, a marked difference in tone between the sort of faith expressed in "Mutability" and that in the last two hymns; but if "Mutability," as I contend, was written sixteen or seventeen years before these last hymns, that is, nearer to the period of the first hymns (what Spenser calls the "greener times" of his youth), the difference in tone becomes explicable. I do not, of course, wish to imply that Spenser was still adolescent at twenty-six to twenty-nine years of age (taking 1550–1553 as range of possibilities for birth dates); but between those years and the age of forty-three to forty-six, there was still room for a good deal of change in spiritual attitudes. Confucius is reported as saying: "At thirty, I could stand; at forty, doubts ceased; at fifty, I understood the laws of Heaven" (Book II, 4).

What I am endeavoring to do is, to interpret "Mutability," the "Garden of Adonis," and *Colin Clout* (lines 799–883) as youthful attempts at a world philosophy, largely under the influence of Empedocles as to cosmic theory, with a curious admixture of notions from Genesis and a few ideas from Aristotle. While the result is something of a hodge-podge, it is not as queer as it has sometimes been represented, and certainly is far more intelligible if removed by a span of years from the conception of the universe found in the last two hymns, where new influences appear—not only the ideas of Benivieni and Ficino, but the loftiest sentiments of Castiglione in his *Il Cortegiano*, together with a commingling of ideas from Platonic, neo-Platonic, Aristotelian, and strictly Christian philosophers. It is still more intelligible when one understands Spenser's real aim in writing the "Mutability" cantos, and on which side his sympathies lay in the debate. This is a matter which, it seems to me, Mr. Greenlaw has decided wrongly.

Most of the points on which I take issue with Mr. Greenlaw are presented in his paper, "Spenser and Lucretius," but a few occur in the other two articles listed at the beginning of this paper. In some points these three articles do not entirely agree. It is the attribution of a dominant influence to Lucretius which causes the difficulty. Of the "Mutability" cantos and the Garden of Adonis passage, Mr. Greenlaw says:

> The chief source of the two passages is Lucretius. Spenser knew *De rerum natura* not merely as a body of great poetry . . . . but as a source of philosophy which he annexed as a province of his mind.[5]

[5] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII (1920), 440–1.

Again, he concludes:

> Both in intellectual atmosphere and in the entire plan of Spenser's poem, including certain elements in the first of these two cantos as well as practically all of the second, the material owes a very great debt to the fifth book of *De rerum natura*. Near the beginning of this book Lucretius speaks once more of his master Epicurus, saying that while walking in his footsteps he follows out his reasonings and teaches in his verses the law of nature . . . . . In this passage it will be observed that Lucretius states the theme of his fifth book to be to set forth the law of all things, how necessity binds all things to continue in that law, and how impotent they are to annul all the binding statutes of time.
>
> This theme is at once similar to that of the Adonis passage and dominant throughout the Mutability cantos, including the judgment given by Nature.[6]

There is a strong initial probability that Spenser would know Lucretius, and it might reasonably be assumed that he would admire him as a poet. Evidence of familiarity is furnished by Mr. Greenlaw in Spenser's use of Lucretius's hymn to Nature. Although I believe several other likely sources could be proposed for Spenser's ideas of Time the enemy, the Golden Age, and the changeableness of the elements(earth, air, fire, and water), I should be willing to concede that Spenser might derive these notions from Lucretius, if a specific source is necessary for these rather usual Renaissance notions. But that Spenser should have been in fundamental agreement with Lucretius on important problems of life seems to me frankly inconceivable.

The fifth book of *De rerum natura*, like the others, undertakes, according to Lucretius's own statement, to present a rational, materialistic natural philosophy which is capable of relieving mankind of all superstitious beliefs, all fear of any gods, all ideas of a life of the spirit apart from the body. Now if that is the aim of Spenser's "Mutability," Spenser did not know it. He thought he was on the other side of the debate, as is definitely indicated by the heading of the seventh canto and the conclusion of it, as well as by the last stanza of the fragmentary eighth, not to mention the whole scheme of the debate.

Lucretius is an epicurean, a materialist, a denier of immortality of the soul, of life after death. He is an atomist whose chance combinations do away with a Creator. He has gods, but they are merely of finer atoms than men, and have no divinity. Fear of the

[6] *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 459.

gods is superstition. There is no one great God, creator and establisher of the universe. Now how does all this fit in with Spenser's habits of mind and thought?

Astonishingly enough, Professor Greenlaw is willing to make Spenser an atomist, "almost as much a materialist as Lucretius," a denier of immortality of the soul, and of the Creator! This from one of the best Spenser scholars of the country, who has himself, in another article, given a very fine appreciation of the spirit of the last two hymns. Speaking of the school of philosophy with which he proposes to align Spenser, he says:

> It flatly denied the supernatural, the realm of the Platonic ideas; denied all mysticism, all revealed religion. It found its supreme expression, up to the advent of modern science, in Lucretius. It was closely akin, ready to establish fruitful contacts, with the new science which in Copernicus, in Galileo, in Newton, and ultimately in Darwin and his followers, was to transform modern life and much of its thought.[7]

How to get rid of the supernatural, the Platonic ideas, the mysticism, the revealed religion of the *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* between Sept. 1596 and whatever date between that and the end of 1598 Professor Greenlaw would choose for the composition of "Mutability" is a pretty problem. It would involve a sudden sloughing off of mental habits, besides the loss of a religion.

In another article, in which Spenser's debt to Alanus de Insulis is stressed,[8] Mr. Greenlaw is obliged to reconcile the scientific spirit of Spenser with his being "spiritually in tune" with mysticism; for Alanus is quite different from Lucretius. He says, speaking of the interest of Spenser in cosmogony,

> The presence of so much of this material in the work of a major poet of the sixteenth century suggests the tendency that was later to give birth to the new science . . . . While Spenser was in no sense an original thinker on scientific matters, was not even a sceptic in his attitude toward the science of his times, he preludes the sort of inquiry destined to make the study of nature supreme over dogma as an avenue to truth. Already the new spirit of scientific research was at work. Bruno adopted eagerly the work of Cusanas and of Copernicus, and by sheer force of his imagination pointed out the course which science was to follow. But he clothed new thoughts in the language of a nature mysticism. With much that we find in his work Spenser was spiritually in tune. That is why the

[7] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 439.

[8] "Some Old Religious Cults in Spenser," *Stud., in Philol.*, XX, 216 ff.

mysticism that was in Alanus appealed to Spenser while it meant nothing to the temperamentally different Chaucer.[9]

In what is probably the first of the three articles, "Spenser's Influence on *Paradise Lost*,"[10] we have still another view:

> His conception of nature is mystical,—in the Adonis myth, in the Hymnes, and in the conception of the Goddess herself in the Mutability cantos.

This is difficult to reconcile. Spenser is in sympathy with Alanus, who is religious, mystical; with Bruno, who is modern, scientific, skeptical, but also mystical; and with the modern, materialistic scientific thought of his day, of which Lucretius is the best representative,—and which is opposed to the supernatural, the mystical, the religious. The difficulty arises chiefly from the attempt to interpret Spenser as scientific, materialistic, skeptical, and atheistic, under the influence of Lucretius.

It is doubtful whether Spenser had any stronger scientific bent than the average cultivated sixteenth-century English gentleman well read in the Greek and Roman classics. Like Du Bartas—perhaps because of him—Spenser rejected, if he knew, Copernicus; so he is not like Bruno there in reaching out for the new science. Spenser's heavens are, like Aristotle's, Ptolemaic; though it is clear from the proem of Book V that Spenser was, as Harvey has also assured us, interested in contemporary astronomy. As for the notions Mr. Greenlaw has in mind, concerning elementary substances, the creation, the "origin of species," etc., I hope to show that Spenser's views are as modern and as scientific as a combination of the views of Moses (15th century B. C.) and those of Empedocles (5th century B. C.) would be likely to insure—that, in fact, there is in Spenser very little on these scientific themes as "modern" as Lucretius. For the points in Empedocles and Lucretius both that have been regarded as preliminaries to Darwinian theory do not appear in Spenser. Perhaps the opposition to this part of Empedocles's doctrine by Aristotle or by Plato may have warned Spenser away from these ideas; or possibly Spenser was simply not interested in "survival of the fittest."

The interpretation of Spenser as materialistic and scientific depends largely on Mr. Greenlaw's decision that the poet sided with the *losing* debater in "Mutability," who is taken to present

[9] *Stud. in Philol.*, XX, 216.
[10] *Ibid.*, XVII, 340.

the poet's real views. As a trace of this belief seems also to color M. Saurat's article cited above, it is worth considering in advance of a study of the supposed relations between Lucretius and Spenser. Mr. Greenlaw expresses quite positively his conviction as to Spenser's being on the losing side:

> The whole attempt of Mutability, detailed in the preceding canto and here brought to trial, may be regarded as an argument for a materialistic conception of the world as against all supernaturalism. Jove represents the idea of a superior spiritual power governing men and things; the aim of Mutability is to unseat him, to assert the rule of change in the heavens as well as on earth. Though Spenser speaks of the whole matter as a victory for Jove, it is clear both from the action and the trial that the true victory is in the assertion of a law in nature that rules men and gods alike; that this conclusion is the same as that in the Adonis passage; and that the Mutability cantos, more clearly even than those with which we have been dealing thus far in this essay, are charged with true Lucretian skepticism. It is worth noting, I think, that Lucretius himself compares his attack on supernaturalism to the attempt of the Titans to cast Jove from his seat.[11]

Still more explicitly (on p. 459) Mr. Greenlaw charges that Spenser, like Lucretius, aimed to depose God as creator and ruler of the universe:

> Lucretius compares his design, in a passage that immediately follows, to the attempt of the giants that warred on Jove, since he and all who, like him, seek to drive out religious superstition are thought to be atheists, whose purpose it is to displace the walls of the world and to brand immortal things in mortal speech (V, 110–121). Spenser's cantos, however disguised, are precisely such an adaptation of the old Titan myth, since the theme is the expulsion of supernaturalism by a materialistic philosophy. Furthermore, Spenser's gods, like those of Lucretius, are far removed from human affairs, living at ease, neither the makers nor the rulers of the earth. This he expresses allegorically not only by the general impression of remoteness that he gives in the first canto, but also by the statement that worldly affairs are entirely in the hands of Hecate, who has rule and principality under her control; of Bellona, who continually stirs up strife; and of Mutability. Even the gods, Mutability states, are of earthly birth and are mortal like all things else.

Now it is true that in the debate the character Mutability represents a materialistic philosophy with some definite points of resemblance to that of Lucretius; but this in no way proves that Spenser's own philosophy of life was akin to that of Lucretius. I have pointed

[11] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 455.

out, in an article on "Spenser's Mutability and Lipsius's *Constancy*"[12] that Lipsius in his two books of *Constancy* stages a debate on the same subject, with the same conclusion, victory for God as creator and maintainer of the universe, based on a decision by the voice of Nature. The question whether Nature rules the gods is thoroughly worked out too. The conclusion is absolutely deistic, and in line with usual stoic positions. Nature's laws and Nature's Order, and the Necessity or Fate that rules the changing affairs of this world are seen as an expression of the will of God who works as omniscient and overruling Providence. If we add to Spenser's "Mutability" the discussion of God's justice and providence in Book V (the scales incident, which is paralleled by Lipsius in *Constancy*), we shall have in Spenser substantially the intellectual views of Lipsius on this problem. There is but one important disagreement. Spenser here, as elsewhere, sighs for the good old times of the Golden Age; and for this tendency Lipsius's philosophy offers him a remedy. Spenser was apparently by nature rather melancholic and backward-looking, so that only by effort could he look forward with hope in progress. Lipsius had the same moods and doubts to struggle with, but, being of a more sanguine temperament, he had more confidence in the results of his philosophic reasonings; so that his conclusion is not only optimistic but positively cheerful. Spenser's conclusion is optimistic, but the effort is apparent, and the end cannot be reached by mere logical reasoning, but requires a definite act of faith.

The aim of Lipsius in *Constancy* may fairly be said to be, to "justify the ways of God to man." Such, I believe, was Spenser's real desire in "Mutability." In Lipsius's debate, the author places himself in the position of the doubter who makes the challenges, which are then refuted by his wise old friend Langius. There is no lack of length or eloquence in the expression of the doubts and disbeliefs. But probably no one would mistake Lipsius's final intention. The one feature of Spenser's poem which lays him open to misinterpretation is his proportion. Unfortunately, he was not brought up on modern rhetorical rules of "Mass." He was, however, aware of the difference in length of the opposed pleas, as we see in the heading of Canto vii:

> Pealing, from Jove, to Nature's Bar,
> bold Alteration pleades
> Large Evidence; but Nature soone
> her righteous Doome areads.

[12] Not yet published.

No matter what the eloquence of opposed pleas, it always has been felt, and probably always will be, that the conclusion of a debate is of vital importance. And if a plan arranges for a formal awarding of victory to one side, it seems reasonably clear that that side was meant by the arranger of the debate to be regarded as establishing his case as right. That is the law of the literary, as well as of the practical, debate. And if the announced theme and intention of the debate line up on the side of the conclusion and award, these together may reasonably be regarded as more significant than mere length of speeches. Now in Spenser's poem the plan is, that Nature shall be umpire; and at the head of Canto vii, her decision is called *righteous*, and is reflected on and accepted in the "imperfect Canto viii" by the poet speaking in his own person—accepted in spite of one lingering doubt about change in worldly affairs. Also, in the beginning of Canto vii, (where we may expect, as in similar heads of cantos elsewhere, a sincere statement of intention), the Muse is invoked to

> tell of Heauens King
> (Thy soueraine Sire) his fortunate successe,
> And victory, in bigger noates to sing,
> Which he obtained against that Titanesse,
> That him of heauens Empire sought to dispossesse.

There is much that is obscure in Spenser, but he does not seem to try to obscure his intended topic or the side he takes in a controversy. Stanza 59 of Canto vii confirms Jove's victory:

> So was the Titaness put down and whist,
> And Jove confirm'd in his imperiall see.

But the conclusion, says Mr. Greenlaw, is very unsatisfactory:

> In the two stanzas which are all we have of the following canto, Spenser indicates that he is not fully satisfied by the explanation which he had put into the mouth of Nature, an explanation which is ultimately classical. He professes to accept the judgment that the heavenly bodies are under the rule of law, but when he contemplates mortality, he finds nought but change. So the *Faerie Queene* ends, if these cantos indeed be what their first editor supposed, a fragment of one of the later books, in an unsolved problem. This uncertainty is not wholly due, of course, to the poet's contemplation of the world of nature; it is due in part to his contemplation of men and events. But it seems very different from the medieval treatises about fortune. Part of this difference seems to me to be due to the new spirit of scientific doubt which was characteristic of the time.[13]

[13] "Spenser's Influence on *Paradise Lost*," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 339.

It is true that, in the first stanza of Canto viii, the poet, speaking in his own person, says that it still seems to him that change rules in this world; but it is also true that, in the next stanza, Spenser concludes the whole discussion with a prayer for rest with "that great Sabbaoth God" who is contrary to Mutability and who rules eternally. And this is the poem which, according to Mr. Greenlaw, was designed to unseat God from his throne!

That Spenser has not clearly and logically removed his doubts by pure reason any fair-minded reader of "Mutability" will at once admit. But the conclusion is a definite act of faith, based upon a will to believe. This seems to me to be in the mind of M. Saurat in the article cited above. But the inability to banish all doubt by pure reason does not seem to be, in the experience of most persons, an insuperable obstacle to religious belief. Persons intelligent enough to inquire and doubt and reason as to religion are seldom able to get an absolutely satisfactory answer, in the realm of logic, to every problem. It seems likely that Spenser remained for years in a state of deliberate faith in spite of intellectual doubts. In the first book of *The Faerie Queene* (published in 1590) Spenser has Fidelia (Faith), carry in her hand a Bible (I, x, 13),—a book

> signd and seald with blood,
> Wherein darke things were writ, hard to be understood.

Far from rejecting the Bible, however, he chooses it as the book for the Redcross Knight to give to Arthur (I, ix,19),

> a worke of wondrous grace, and able soules to save.

This saving power of the Holy Word is dependent upon the ability of Faith to interpret to Una's knight those teachings

> That weaker wit of Man could never reach,
> Of God, of grace, of justice, of free will.

To brand a sixteenth-century Englishman with atheism is a serious stigma. What in Spenser justifies it? That he has doubts? What thinking person, however religious, has not had them? Tennyson, assailed by scientific doubt as well as personal grief and bewilderment over the problem of evil and of God's justice, reasoned at great length in *In Memoriam*; but when he finally arrived at a religious philosophy of life, he, too, required a definite act of faith. Is he, because of his eloquent voicing of his misgivings, classified chiefly as a poet of doubt, a skeptic, an agnostic,

an atheist? Milton did as handsomely by Satan in his defiance of the powers of Heaven as Spenser did by the Titan warring on Jove. But who would think of lining up Milton on the side of the powers of darkness?

The sensible conclusion is that Spenser, like many a young man, attempted to build him a religion upon purely logical grounds, and, for reasons that have something to do with the very nature of religion, failed. But at the same time he achieved, with effort, an act of faith which permitted religious belief in spite of a serious misgiving. Then, during the interval of perhaps sixteen or seventeen years between this effort and the *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, he rose to the heights of religious exaltation by the aid of emotion and inspiration rather than by pure reason. It is true, he made him an intellectual staff of Platonic idealism, but he also grew a pair of wings—of pure Christian faith and hope.

How far Spenser's position on religion was removed from that of Lucretius may be seen from three passages where, with slight variations, Lucretius presents one conception of the godless origin of things and the godless rule of them by chance, as opposed to the conception of a universe set going by a Creator and showing the presence of God in his created work. It is as remote as can be from Spenser's conception of a God revealed in Nature. Lucretius says (V,179–194):

> For in such wise the first-beginnings of things many in number in many ways impelled by blows for infinite ages back and kept in motion by their own weights have been wont to be carried along and to unite in all manners of ways and thoroughly test every kind of production possible by their mutual combinations; that it is not strange if they have also fallen into arrangements and have come into courses like to those out of which this sum of things is now carried on by constant renewing.
>
> But if I did not know what first-beginnings of things are, yet this judging by the very arrangements of heaven I should venture to affirm, and led by many other facts to maintain, that the nature of things has by no means been made for us by divine power.[14]

In two almost identical passages (V,418 ff. and I, 1020 ff.) Lucretius denies design and attributes to his first-beginnings (which were somewhat similar to what later came to be called atoms) a sort of self-directing activity which, combined with

[14] I use the translation of H. A. J. Munro, which seems to me sufficiently literal for this discussion. The passages can be easily located in the original.

chance, was the sole guiding principle in creation. I will quote the fuller of the passages (V, 418 ff):

For verily not by design did the first-beginnings of things station themselves each in its right place by keen intelligence, nor did they bargain sooth to say what motions each should assume, but because the first-beginnings of things many in number in many ways impelled by blows for infinite ages back and kept in motion by their own weights have been wont to be carried along and to unite in all manner of ways and thoroughly to test every kind of production possible by their mutual combinations, therefore it is that spread abroad through great time, after trying unions and motions of every kind, they at length meet together in those masses which suddenly brought together become often the rudiments of great things, of earth, sea, and heaven, and the race of living things.

How different this denial of design and of divine origin from Spenser's view in the early *Hymne in Honour of Beautie*, lines 29–32:

> What time this worlds great workmaister did cast
> To make al things, such as we now behold,
> It seemes that he before his eyes had plast
> A goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould
> He fashiond them as comely as he could.

Lucretius has gods, but they are merely beings composed of finer atoms than are men. As for any divine power or everlasting life, that is a figment of men's imaginations arising out of dreams. It is a mere makeshift of the unintelligent who cannot explain the system of nature. Thunderbolts are not from Jupiter. (Spenser seems fond of referring to Jove's thunderbolts). Other causes of superstitious fear are rationally explained away by Lucretius to relieve men of this erroneous belief in gods (V, 1160 ff.).

Mr. Greenlaw rids himself of Spenser's Creator by holding that Spenser, like Lucretius, stressed spontaneity, or voluntary activity of things, as doing away with God. Lucretius says (II, 1077ff.):

If you well apprehend and keep in mind these things, nature free at once and rid of her haughty overlords is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the gods. For I appeal to the holy breasts of the gods who in tranquil peace pass a calm time and an unruffled existence, who can rule the sun, who hold in his hand with controlling force the strong reins of the immeasurable deep?

The ideas, says Mr. Greenlaw, are the same as Spenser's; for

Spenser lays special stress on the fact that no Gardener is needed, that all

things grow of their own accord; thus he gets away from supernaturalism as completely as Lucretius himself. He also, it will be noticed, insists on the order of Nature.

And again,

The explanation of the origin of organic life is very similar in the two poets. Spenser first speaks of the endless progeny of weeds that bud and blossom in the garden of Dame Nature. No gardener is needed to take care of these, or of the souls that are also growing in the garden waiting for the time when they are to be clothed in earthly weeds.[15]

But, to be fair to Spenser, why not, when quoting the lines on the absence of any gardener from the Garden of Adonis which so impress Mr. Greenlaw as denying a divine origin of life, complete the passage (III, vi, 34) to include the Creator whom Spenser has so clearly, in the most orthodox and Genesaic fashion, indicated as starting-point?

> Ne needs there Gardiner to set, or sow,
> To plant or prune: for of their owne accord
> All things, as they created were, doe grow,
> And yet remember well the mightie word,
> Which first was spoken by th' Almightie lord,
> That bad them to increase and multiply:
> Ne doe they need with water of the ford,
> Or of the clouds to moysten their roots dry:
> For in themselves eternall moisture they imply.

The "mightie word" of "the Almightie lord" is undoubtedly that in Genesis, I, 22, "God blessed them saying, Be fruitful and multiply." Spenser's remark on the needlessness of water from the ford or from the clouds is also adequately explained by the statement in Genesis, II, 5: "The Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth. . . . . But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." Surely this is what Spenser had in mind in the presence of eternal moisture self-supplied from the soil, rather than an acceptance, as Mr. Greenlaw suggests, of Lucretius's grotesque notion (V, 796 ff.) of Mother Earth's gushing milk from her pores to feed the infant creatures that had burst forth from the wombs attached by roots to the earth, their Mother.

Mr. Greenlaw's interpretation of "For in themselves eternall moisture they imply" as equivalent to another remark by Lucretius on the origin of species seems equally unhappy. Lucretius says (I, 188 ff.):

[15] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 447 and 444.

We are told that all things grow step by step, as is natural, from a fixed seed, and increase in size and are fed out of their own matter.

The passages seem to me to be on different themes. Lucretius is saying that things grows from a *fixed* seed, as is natural, and preserve their kind; "so that you may know that all things grow from their own matter." And he immediately adds:

Furthermore without fixed seasons of rain the earth is unable to put forth its gladdening produce, nor again if kept from food could the nature of living things continue its kind and sustain life.

This is certainly opposite to Spenser's remark,

> Ne doe they need with water of the ford,
> Or of the clouds to moysten their roots dry;
> For in themselves eternall moisture they imply.

Spenser can endure the miraculous; Lucretius must explain rationally in accordance with observed natural laws.

Mr. Greenlaw declares of Spenser that, "unlike some of his contemporaries, he does not relate the story of the creation according to Genesis, though there is no evidence that he rejected it."[16] It is true that Spenser nowhere turns into verse the whole scriptural story of the creation; but if one cares to add together the various passages on the creation by Spenser, he will find Genesis well represented. In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (dated 1591 in the preface) we have a combination of two accounts of creation, in lines 841ff. One of these is that in Genesis. In line 850 the emergence from the void suggests Genesis I, 2, "The earth was without form and void." The earth was at first in darkness (*Colin Clout*, 855; Genesis, I, 2). But light appeared. Then the heavens came (*C.C.*, 855; Gen., I, 6). Next the earth showed her naked head (*C. C.*, 857) out of "deep waters which her drownd alway." So in Genesis I, 9: "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." Day and night were then established, Spenser placing this step a little earlier in the series than in Genesis. Spenser begins with vegetable life, as in Genesis, except in the very brief passage in *Colin Clout*, where he skips the vegetable stage.

As to the creation of man, the allegorical account in the Garden of Adonis is mythical and under Pythagorean influence as to the doctrine of pre-existence and transmigration of souls. But the *Hymne*

[16] "Spenser's Influence on *Paradise Lost*," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 340.

of Heavenly Love, which is direct and not allegorical, is decidedly orthodox in its following of the account of Genesis, I, 26 and II, 7:

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
> And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Spenser's account of the divine plan for the creation of man in the *Hymne of Heavenly Love* begins with line 105. Man is a creature

> Whose root from earths base groundwork shold begin
>
> Therefore of clay, base, vile and next to noght,
> Yet form'd by wondrous skill, and by his might:
> According to an heavenly patterne wrought,
> Which he had fashiond in his wise foresight,
> He man did make, and breathed a living spright
> Into his face most beautifull and fayre.

As for Spenser's thinking much on the "origin of species," as Mr. Greenlaw believes,[17] or his developing any noteworthy ideas on it, I see no evidence of it. He is interested in the separateness of the species as an instance of Order. Mr. Greenlaw likens Spenser's interest in Order here[18] to that of Lucretius (II, 1077–92), where Nature, though doing things spontaneously, observes order, as all things are begotten in classes. But while Lucretius's Order is not teleological, as he himself expressly asserts in at least three places, that of Spenser, like that of Lipsius, is. Chance directed the original movements and combinations of Lucretius's first-beginnings in the creation of things.

There is little in Spenser's account of the origin of species on which to base a dependence on Lucretius's account of kinds (II, 1077–92). Spenser says (III, vi, 35):

> Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
> And uncouth formes, which none yet ever knew,
> And every sort is in a sundry bed
> Set by it selfe, and ranckt in comely rew:
> Some fit for reasonable soules t' indew,
> Some made for beasts, some made for birds to weare,
> And all the fruitfull spawne of fishes hew
> In endlesse rancks along enraunged were,
> That seem'd the *Ocean* could not containe them there.

[17] "Spenser's Influence on *Paradise Lost*," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 340.
[18] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 447.

As it happens, neither the passage in Spenser nor that in Lucretius referred to by Mr. Greenlaw contains anything markedly different from the account in Genesis, I, 20–26, which is fully as insistent as Lucretius on the spontaneity of production and also on the separateness of the kinds, as well as on the prolific production remarked on by Spenser:

> And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
>
> And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind. . . . .
>
> And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind. . . . .
>
> And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth after their kind. . . . .
>
> And God said, Let us make man in our image.

These verses are quite as good a source for anything in Spenser on origin of species as the passage in Lucretius Mr. Greenlaw refers to—or any other passage, for that matter. There is certainly nothing strikingly scientific in Spenser's observations on species of animals. Spenser's uncouth forms may perhaps be no more than the great whales of Genesis, instead of Lucretius's monsters produced in the course of nature's experiments, as Mr. Greenlaw thinks. And certainly there is nowhere in Spenser any reminder of the grotesque picture made by Lucretius of the birth of mortal men from wombs attached to the earth by roots (795–819), which Mr. Greenlaw summarizes to show resemblance to Spenser. I have accounted for the "eternal moisture" above in a way that makes Genesis a far better source than Lucretius at this point.

Let us consider next the supposed parallel between Spenser's "atomic theory" of first-beginnings and that of Lucretius, as traced by Professor Greenlaw. Though admitting a Platonic influence on the Garden of Adonis, he predicates an atomistic conception of origins in Spenser under the influence of Lucretius, as well as an acceptance of Lucretius's ideas of chaos, of void, and of the relations of substance and form, and certain philosophic principles.

> According to Lucretius, some bodies are the first-beginnings of things; the remaining bodies are formed from a union (concilium) of these first-beginnings. Nothing is ever begotten out of nothing by supernatural power. The laws of nature determine what each thing can do, and what

it cannot do. Thus to Lucretius the existence of these unchangeable substances and their operation independent of supernatural aid is connected with the idea of a definite order and fixed law in nature. His second proposition is that nothing is ever annihilated, but all things on their dissolution go back into the first-beginnings. Next, Lucretius explains the existence of void. This void exists mixed up with the substances of bodies, as well as in the universe outside the created world. Thus all nature, whether the world or the realm of chaos, is made up of first-beginnings and void. In this philosophy Lucretius opposes Aristotle, who regarded the universe as depending upon a center which was the goal of all motion, and Plato, who in the *Timaeus* insists over and over that all the elements were used in the creation, leaving no part of any of them out of which another such world might be created, and also guaranteeing the safety of the world and its freedom from decay. Far from thinking that all the elements were used in the creation of the world, Lucretius maintains that continual waste goes on, so that the world is fed by fresh streams of atoms flowing in from the infinite void. If this supply of matter should lose its way in the void and fail to replenish the needs of the world, chaos would result.[19]

I do not find in Spenser any discussion of the problem of waste or of a constant fresh supply of matter coming in from the infinite void, such as would link him with Lucretius. Neither on void nor on chaos is there any special resemblance to Lucretius. As to the principle that "Nothing is begotten out of nothing by supernatural power," one may find a similar principle in the mystic Empedocles, as well as in several of his predecessors. It belonged to a whole line of philosophers.

It may be stated positively that Spenser's "first-beginnings" are not those of Lucretius. Spenser cannot by any stretch of the term be called an atomist. He follows an older school of philosophic thought, represented by Empedocles of Agrigentum. Whether Lucretius called his first-beginnings *rerum primordia*, *materies*, *corpora prima*, or *corpora genitalia*, they act like what were later called atoms (as, *e.g.* in the account of the chance combinations quoted above); and Lucretius may fairly be grouped with the atomists. But Spenser's first-beginnings are the four elements—earth, air, fire, water,—which nobody with a feeling for scientific distinctions would ever think of referring to as atoms.

Just as Empedocles of Agrigentum imitated Parmenides in plan, so Lucretius admired and imitated Empedocles, even to the point of coinciding with him in a few general philosophic principles. But he flatly contradicted the theory of origins which Spenser

[19] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 448–50.

seems to have adopted from Empedocles. The praise of Lucretius for the man who is responsible for much of Spenser's theory of origins is expressed in *De rerum natura*, I, 716ff., where he says that Sicily "held within it nothing more glorious than this man, nothing more holy marvellous and dear. The verses too of this godlike genius cry with a loud voice and set forth in such wise his glorious discoveries that he hardly seems born of a mortal stock." It is hardly surprising, then, to find resemblance between a few of Empedocles's ideas and those of such an admirer. Both, for example, repeat to a considerable extent the Eleatic arguments for the indestructibility of "what is." But Lucretius rejects absolutely Empedocles's ideas on first-beginnings (I, 739 ff.):

> In the first place, this god-like philosopher and his followers have yet gone to ruin in the first-beginnings of things.

He goes on to show why they have gone to ruin. It is because they are not, like him, atomists. They believe in four first-beginnings, the elements—fire, earth, air, water. Lucretius devotes a long passage to disproving the elements as ultimate sources and establishing what were later called atoms as sources.

Again, Lucretius attacks (I, 690–733) all those who make the first-beginnings of things two-fold couplings,—air with fire, and earth with water,—and those who believe that all things grow out of four origins, fire, earth, air, and water.

Now Spenser holds precisely the theory of origins that Lucretius rejected and criticised. In "Mutability," VII, 25, he says of the elements, earth, water, air, and fire,

> Thus, all these fower (the which the groundwork bee
> Of all the world and of all living wights).

And the same stanza contains the two-fold couplings: fire and air, air and water, water and earth. Similarly in *Colin Clout*, (847 ff.), we have other two-fold couplings: "The cold began to covet heat, and water fire," bringing forth other kinds as a result. Now Lucretius names Empedocles of Agrigentum as the author of this doctrine of the four elements and the two-fold couplings. He criticises him further, together with other followers of Heraclitus in certain doctrines:

> Moreover they go back to heaven and its fires for a beginning, and first suppose that fire changes into air, next that from air water is begotten and earth is produced out of water, etc. . . . . and that these cease not

to interchange. . . . . All which first-beginnings must on no account do. (I, 782.)

Compare with this the stanza by Spenser on the elements partly quoted above:

> Yet are they chang'd (by other wondrous slights)
> Into themselves, and lose their native mights;
> The Fire to Aire, and th' Ayre to Water sheere,
> And Water into Earth.—(*Mutability*, VII, 25.)

Lucretius proceeds with his attack on those who begin with the elements:

> I have assumed that earth and fire are mortal, and have not doubted that water and air perish, and have said that these are likewise begotten and grow afresh. (V, 247.)

He makes sport of the myth of the ever-burning lamp of the world. But Spenser's elements are eternal, and he comments specifically on the immortality of fire:

> Last is the fire: which, though it live for ever,
> Ne can be quenched quite.—(*Mutability*, VII, 24.)

It is clear, then, that we must look elsewhere than to Lucretius for Spenser's theory of first-beginnings. As I have already hinted, the source of much of Spenser's earlier cosmic theory may be found in the Sicilian philosopher, Empedocles of Agrigentum (?495-435 B. C.), whom Lucretius admired in general but disagreed with radically on origins. In "Mutability," in the "Garden of Adonis," and in *Colin Clout* the theory of the four elements as groundwork, and the principles of combination of them, and several other ideas point clearly to Empedocles as source. Before taking these up in detail, it may be well to give a brief account of Empedocles, that the difference between his system and that of Lucretius may be clear.[20]

[20] My account of his system is based chiefly upon the fragments of Empedocles as edited by Henry Stein, *Empedoclis Agrigentini fragmenta*, 1852; by Simon Karsten, *Empedoclis . . . . carminum reliquiae: de vita ejus . . . .*, 1838; and by John Burnet, in *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1908, 238 ff. There are many other accounts accessible. I quote in this paper passages from Burnet's translation of the Fragments (1908 edition), having compared them with Stein's and Karsten's texts. The numbering of the fragments is that of Diels.

A fifteen-page survey at the close of Karsten's text will give an idea of the use of Empedocles by later writers.

Spenser's knowledge of Empedocles may have been got at second-hand,—but not because he could not or did not read Greek philosophy in the original, as has been suggested recently by several Spenser scholars with reference to his use of Greek sources. The curriculum of the Merchant Taylors school and that of Cambridge would leave little chance for such ignorance. And that Spenser availed himself of his opportunities is indicated by the testimony of his friend Lodowick Bryskett, in his *Civil Discourse* (1606) (p.25):

> Yet is there a gentleman in this company, whom I haue had often a purpose to intreate, that as his leisure might serue him, he would vouchsafe to spend some time with me to instruct me in some hard points which I cannot myselfe understand: knowing him to be not onely perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in Philosophie, both morall and naturall. Neuertheles such is my bashfulness, as I neuer yet durst open my mouth to disclose this my desire unto him, though I haue not wante of some hartning thereunto from himselfe. For of his loue and kindnes to me, he encouraged me long sithens to follow the reading of the Greek tongue, and offered me his helpe to understand it.

The two works containing the natural philosophy of Empedocles are: a poem on *Nature* and the *Purifications*. The Librarians of Alexandria estimated that the former contained about 2000 verses and the latter 3000.[21] Diels' edition of fragments gives about 350 verses and parts of verses of the poem on Nature. This is hardly a fifth of the whole, but we know much more of Empedocles through other sources of information. Certain traditions have descended from his school of followers. Many of those who transmitted his ideas in physics were alive in the time of Plato, and both Plato and Aristotle were to some extent influenced by his doctrines, though both disagreed with him on certain fundamentals. Plato shows kinship on the doctrine of pre-existence of souls, but he refers to Empedocles only twelve times. Aristotle introduces 201 references to Empedocles in twenty-four separate works; and for this reason, if no other, it seems reasonable to suppose that Spenser would be aware of the nature of Empedocles's doctrines. Plutarch refers to Empedocles 118 times, of which five are in *De Isis et Osiris;* and Ovid is evidently familiar with him, though he refers to him but once (*Ibis*).

Empedocles was, like Pythagoras, a mystic philosopher, and

[21] Cf. *Diog.* VIII, 77 (*R. P.* 162); Suidas, s. v. *Empedokles.* Cf. Diels, "Ueber die Gedichte des Empedokles," *Koenigl. Akad. Berlin, Sitzungsb.*, 1898, pp. 396 ff.; and John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (1908), pp. 238 ff.

believed in the transmigration of souls. He preached a new religion of purity and abstinence as a means of securing release from the wheel of re-birth. It is possible that Spenser took from Empedocles this Pythagorean doctrine of re-birth, though he might easily meet the doctrine in a later form. However, it is worth noting that in the two poems of Empedocles the Pythagorean doctrine of pre-existence of souls is combined with the peculiar cosmogony that Spenser exhibits in his earlier accounts of origins.

As a physicist, Empedocles was not a monist. He might properly be called a pluralist, but certainly not an atomist. He took from Parmenides a conception of unalterable being, restating it over and over again. This doctrine influenced many later systems, including Lucretius's, and recurs in several of Spenser's poems. The distinctive turn given it by Empedocles is a reconciling of unalterable being with the flux of Heraclitus. *Nothing is created and nothing is destroyed*, is the contribution of Parmenides. *Yet things perish into one another, and birth and death are the mingling and separation of the eternal elements*, is the statement of Empedocles under the influence of Heraclitus's "eternal flux." This combination is a favorite with Empedocles—the eternity of substance, but the shift of form. Fragments 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 21, and 34 are especially devoted to the idea. A few illustrations follow:

11 and 12. Fools! for they have no far-reaching thoughts—who deem that what before was not comes into being, or that aught can perish and be utterly destroyed. For it cannot be that aught can arise from what in no way is, and it is impossible and unheard of that what is should perish; for it will always be, wherever one may keep putting it. (*R. P.* 165a.)

8. And I shall tell thee another thing. There is no coming into being of aught that perishes, nor any end for it in baneful death; but only mingling and change of what has been mingled. Coming into being is but a name given to these by men. (*R. P.* 165.)

9. But, when the elements have been mingled in the fashion of a man and come to the light of day, or in the fashion of wild beasts or plants or birds, then men say that these come into being; and when they are separated, they call that woeful death. They call it not aright; but I too follow the custom, and call it so myself.

17. And nothing comes into being besides these, nor do they pass away; for, if they had been passing away continually, they would not be now, and what could increase this All and whence would it come? How, too, could it perish, since no place is empty of these things? They are what they are; but, running through one another, they become now this, now that, and like things evermore. (*R. P.* 166.)

21. Behold the sun, everywhere bright and warm, and all the immortal things that are bathed in heat and bright radiance. Behold the rain, everywhere dark and cold; and from the earth issue forth things close-pressed and solid. When they are in strife all these are different in form and are separated; but they come together in love, and are desired by one another.

For out of these have sprung all things that were and are and shall be—trees and men and women, beasts and birds and the fishes that dwell in the waters, yea, and the gods that live long lives and are exalted in honour. (*R. P.* 166i.)

For these things are what they are; but, running through one another, they take different shapes—so much does mixture change them. (*R. P.* 166g.)

The Lucretian passage (I, 227–8), on nature's dissolving things back into their first bodies but not destroying them, cited by Professor Greenlaw in his "Spenser and Lucretius," page 454, as proving Lucretius's influence on Spenser offers no advance upon Empedocles; and if Spenser's origins are to be found rather in Empedocles than in Lucretius, it would be better to attribute this also to the earlier source.

Empedocles had a few original ideas, and achieved some further advance on earlier systems by new combinations of old ideas. The Eleatics had no explanation for motion. The problem bequeathed to Empedocles by Parmenides was, how to introduce any differences into the matter of an eternal and immovable sphere, and how to get motion and change into it. Empedocles denies unity of substance,—that 'all that is, is one,'—and introduces a variety of elements as first-beginnings (what Plato later called στοιχεῖα). The elements are eternal. "They are what they are." But new forms are produced by mingling and separation of the elements. As Empedocles has four roots, and a mixture of them in place of the homogeneous or continuous mass of Parmenides, change and motion are now possible.

Empedocles first introduces his four elements or "roots of all things" under mythological names, (in Fragment 6), as did many early philosophers in speaking of primary substances. But it is clear that they are not gods, for their nature is revealed in a later passage, Fragment 71:

But if thy assurance of these things was in any way deficient as to how out of Water and Earth and Air and Fire mingled together, arose the forms and colours of all those mortal things that have been fitted together by Aphrodite, and so are now come into being. . . . . (Cf. Fr. 17.)

These elements are primitive material substances, but they are mingled together and form one all-including sphere.

Spenser's elements are the same, as we have seen in "Mutability," VII, 25, (quoted above on page 732), and in *Colin Clout*, 847ff. They are the groundwork of all; they are eternal, and they are mingled in one body. "Mutability," (VII, 25), tells of the changes, as of fire to air, and concludes,

> Yet all are in one body, and as one appeare.

It is true that these rather general ideas might have come to Spenser from several sources. I emphasize the resemblance to Empedocles in order to show that, in accepting this doctrine, Spenser is lined up with an Empedoclean position squarely opposed by Lucretius in his doctrine of origins.

It is the way in which the elements mingle and separate that makes unmistakable Spenser's reliance upon Empedocles for his earlier cosmic theories. This influence was specially significant for Spenser's earlier philosophy of life, since it is bound up with his whole conception of Love as the source of every living thing and indeed of the universe. Though later he outgrew this idea, he never completely lost it. His progression was rather toward a higher conception of this love, reaching its perfection near the close of his poetic career in the *Hymnes of Divine Love.*

The distinctive doctrine which Spenser took over from Empedocles is that of Love and Strife as combining and disintegrating forces working the changes among the four elements. Given the four elements in the one sphere, no particular forms could arise without some means of separating the four elements and some other means of bringing them together in varying proportions. At the time Empedocles wrote, incorporeal forces had not been conceived. He therefore posited two more corporeal elements, Strife and Love. His descriptions of them equate them with the other four elements, but his accounts of their behavior prove that they were active forces or principles, agents disintegrating and recombining the four elements. This was understood by Aristotle, who says (*Met.* A, 10, 1075, b3): "The love of Empedocles is both an efficient cause, for it brings together, and a material cause, for it is a part of the mixture." The elements are separated by Strife. Love then brings them together into a variety of new forms. There is a cyclic progress of disintegration and recombination. Aristotle also comments (*Met.* A. 4. 985 a21) on the fact that, in a sense, each o

these forces acts both to disintegrate and to recombine. For, when Strife breaks up the Sphere it disintegrates elements, but it combines when it brings together one element, Fire. And Love, though combining elements into one particular form, is also separating parts of the elements from their kind. The Love here described by Empedocles as an elemental substance is not usually thought to be the same as an attraction of like for like, to which also he assigns importance in formation of the world. But there is one passage in Fr. 21, quoted above, p. 736, which seems to suggest kinship at least. Fragments 16 and 17 give the best exposition of the function of Love and Strife among the elements. Fragments 35 and 36 explain the cycles of domination of Love and Strife alternately; and 21, read after these, will become clearer as explaining Strife and Love in the creation of the animal world.

16. For of a truth they [Strife and Love] were aforetime and shall be; nor ever, methinks, will boundless time be emptied of that pair. (*R. P.* 166c.)

17. I shall tell thee a twofold tale. At one time it grew to be one only out of many; at another, it divided up to be many instead of one. There is a double becoming of perishable things and a double passing away. The coming together of all things brings one generation into being and destroys it; the other grows up and is scattered as things become divided. And these things never cease continually changing places, at one time all uniting in one through Love, at another each borne in different directions by the repulsion of Strife. Thus, as far as it is their nature to grow into one out of many, and to become many once more when the one is parted asunder, so far they come into being and their life abides not. But inasmuch as they never cease changing their places continually, so far they are ever immovable as they go round the circle of existence.

But come, hearken to my words, for it is learning that increaseth wisdom. . . . . At one time it grew together to be one only out of many, at another it parted asunder so as to be many instead of one;—Fire and Water and Earth and the mighty height of Air; dread Strife, too, apart from these, of equal weight to each, and Love among them, equal in length and breadth. Her do thou contemplate with thy mind, nor sit with dazed eyes. It is she that makes them have thoughts of love and work the works of peace. They call her by the names of Joy and Aphrodite. Her has no mortal yet marked moving round among them, but do thou attend to the undeceitful ordering of my discourse.

35, 36. But now I shall retrace my steps over the path of song that I have traveled before, drawing from my saying a new saying. When Strife was fallen to the lowest depth of the vortex, and Love had reached to the centre of the whirl, in it do all things come together so as to be one only;

not all at once, but coming together at their will each from different quarters; and, as they mingled, countless tribes of mortal creatures were scattered abroad. Yet many things remained unmixed, alternating with the things that were being mixed, namely, all that Strife not fallen yet retained; for it had not yet altogether retired perfectly from them to the outermost boundaries of the circle. Some of it still remained within, and some had passed out from the limbs of the All. But in proportion as it kept rushing out, a soft, immortal stream of blameless Love kept running in, and straightway those things became mortal which had been immortal before, those things were mixed that had been unmixed, each changing its path. And, as they mingled, countless tribes of mortal creatures were scattered abroad endowed with all manners of forms, a wonder to behold. (*R. P.* 169.)

The clearest expression of this doctrine by Spenser will be found in one of the early hymns, the *Hymne in Honour of Love*. Empedocles, in Fragment 16, said, "Strife and Love were aforetime and shall be ever." Spenser portrays love as the eldest of the "heavenly Peares" in the *Hymne in Honour of Love*, 57ff.:

> For ere this worlds still mouing mightie masse,
> Out of great *Chaos* ugly prison crept,
> In which his goodly face long hidden was
> From heauens view, and in deepe darknesse kept,
> Love . . . .
> Gan reare his head.

Then follows an account of the conflict of Love and Strife in the creation of the world and its living forms. Love took wings and flew aloft.

> Then through the world his way he gan to take,
> The world that was not till he did it make;
> Whose sundrie parts he from them selues did seuer,
> The which before had lyen confused euer.
>
> The earth, the ayre, the water, and the fyre,
> Then gan to raunge themselues in huge array,
> And with contrary forces to conspyre
> Each against other, by all meanes they may,
> Threatning their owne confusion and decay:
> Ayre hated earth, and water hated fyre,
> Till Loue relented their rebellious yre.
>
> He then them tooke, and tempering goodly well
> Their contrary dislikes with loued meanes,
> Did place them all in order, and compell

To keepe themselues within their sundrie raines,
Together linkt with Adamantine chaines;
Yet so, as that in euery liuing wight
They mixe themselues, and shew their kindly might.

So euer since they firmely haue remained,
And duly well obserued his beheast;
Through which now all these things that are contained
Within this goodly cope, both most and least
Their being haue, and dayly are increast.
Through secret sparks of his infused fyre,
Which in the barraine cold he doth inspyre.

Thereby they all do liue and moued are
To multiply the likenesse of their kynd.

Fragment 26, of Empedocles, tells the tale of conflict of Love and Strife again:

For they prevail in turn as the circle comes around, and pass into one another, and grow great in their appointed turn. (*R. P.* 166c.)

They are what they are; but, running through one another, they become men and the tribes of beasts. At one time they are all brought together into one order by Love; at another, they are carried each in different directions by the repulsion of Strife, till they grow once more into one and are wholly subdued. Thus in so far as they are wont to grow into one out of many, and again divided become more than one, so far they come into being and their life is not lasting; but in so far as they never cease changing continually, so far are they evermore, immovable in the circle.

It will be noted that in Spenser's story Love and Strife act among the elements just as in Empedocles's, and we have the mixture, the subdual of Strife by Love, and the growing into one, the dependence of all creatures upon these elements and these activities for their coming into being, and (elsewhere in Spenser) the circle or wheel of existence.

The same theory of Love as pre-existent, as maker of the world and as opponent of Strife, and of the conflicts and combinations of the elements prefaces the theory of the creation contained in *Colin Clout*, 839ff.:

For long before the world he was y'bore
And bred aboue in *Venus* bosome deare:
For by his powre the world was made of yore,
And all that therein wondrous doth appeare.
For how should else things so far from attone
And so great enemies as of them bee,

Be euer drawne together into one,
And taught in such accordance to agree?
Through him the cold began to couet heat,
And water fire; the light to mount on hie;
And th'heauie downe to peize; the hungry t'eat
And voydnesse to seeke full satietie.
So being former foes, they wexed friends,
And gan by litle learne to loue each other:
So being knit, they brought forth other kynds
Out of the fruitfull wombe of their great mother.

This looks like a re-working of the passage in the *Hymne in Honour of Love* quoted above.

Empedocles's doctrine of origins probably appealed to Spenser because it was mystical and poetic and agreed with his youthful convictions as to the all-importance of love. But with such a man as Burghley it may have helped to give him the reputation of a vain amatorious poet.

In the Garden of Adonis, "seminarie of all things born," Venus is the mother of all forms, and Adonis the father (III, vi, 47). Possibly Fragment 17 of Empedocles throws a light on Adonis the father of all forms, who is subject to mortality and yet eternal in mutability. And it may be that the Boar imprisoned by Venus is a figure for Strife, the foe of Love. It will be noticed that in the kindred passages in *An Hymne in Honour of Love,* (lines 87–90), Love chains up the contrary, striving elements.

Many of the difficulties arising out of Empedocles's doctrines Spenser evades, being guided in this perhaps by the criticism of Plato and Aristotle. Plato in his Laws condemns Empedocles for leaving no room for design, while Aristotle says he does not account for the chance that made the elements "run" in a certain direction. Empedocles believed in a God as well as gods, and in the immortality of the soul. He was mystical and intensely religious; but his cosmic origins leave loopholes for materialistic philosophers.

Lucretius takes ideas from Empedocles and gives them an entirely new turn. Though he starts with something like atoms and rejects the elements as foundations, Lucretius develops chance combinations of his first-beginnings as the order of creation, thereby definitely and intentionally eliminating design, and with it a creator's mind and function. Also Lucretius, like Empedocles, has a doctrine approaching what came later to be called "survival of the fittest"; but his doctrine is not that of

Empedocles. A very brief sketch of the notions of Empedocles and Lucretius on this point will suffice to show that Spenser follows neither,—that he almost entirely evades the problem, touching it but once, very slightly, in such a way as to suggest Aristotle, rather than Empedocles or Lucretius, from both of whom Aristotle differed decidedly.

Empedocles believed in abiogenesis, or spontaneous generation, as the origin of living forms. His account of trees as the first living, growing things, rising up because of the heat in the earth, so that they are parts of the earth just as embryos are parts of the uterus, is substantially the same idea as Ovid's, as may be seen by comparing Fragments 77–81 of Empedocles with *Metamorphoses*, I, 370.[22] To account for similar ideas in Spenser, therefore, it is hardly necessary to turn to Ovid.

Empedocles's account of the creation of animals is peculiar. Animals first appear from the earth not as whole individuals but in parts:

57. On it [the earth] many heads sprung up without necks and arms, wandered bare and bereft of shoulders. Eyes strayed up and down in want of foreheads. (*R.P.* 173a.)

58. Solitary limbs wandered seeking for union.

59. But as divinity was mingled still further with divinity, these things joined together as each might chance, and many other things besides them continually arose. (*R.P.* 173b.)

60. Shambling creatures with countless hands.

61. Many creatures with faces and breasts looking in different directions were born; some, offspring of oxen with faces of men, while others, again, arose as offspring of men with heads of oxen, and creatures in whom the nature of women and men was mingled, furnished with sterile parts. (*R. P.* 173b.)

62. Come now, hear how the Fire as it was separated caused the night-born shoots of men and tearful women to arise; for my tale is not off the point nor uninformed. Whole-natured forms first arose from the earth, having a portion both of water and fire. These did the fire, desirous of reaching its like, send up, showing as yet neither the charming form of women's limbs, nor yet the voice and parts that are proper to men. (*R. P.* 173c.)

[22] On Empedocles's account of the creation of living forms, we have the doxographical tradition and the Aristotelian interpretations (as in the Treatise on Plants) to help out the fragments. The text of Aetios is quoted in part by J. Burnet in his *Early Greek Philosophy*. Aetios gives the clearest view of the four stages of life in accordance with the dominance of love and strife. I have not presented this because it is not in Spenser.

20. This [the contest of Love and Strife] is manifest in the mass of mortal limbs. At one time all the limbs that are the body's portion are brought together by Love in blooming life's high season; at another, severed by cruel Strife, they wander each alone by the breakers of life's sea. It is the same with plants and the fish that make their homes in the waters, with the beasts that have their lairs on the hills and the seabirds that sail on wings.) *R. P.* 173d.)

If we must have monsters as an origin of Spenser's "uncouth forms" among the created animals, we may find as good ones in Empedocles as in Lucretius; but it is possible that the "great whales" of Genesis would do as well.

The extraordinary beings that, according to Empedocles, were brought together by the play of love and strife became extinct unless fitted to support themselves and propagate. Others arose, by direct birth from the earth as before. Thus, in the cycle in which Love predominates there is a sort of survival of the fittest. It was in another cycle, or stage, presumably, that the whole-natured forms as yet undistinguished as to sex arose (See the end of Fr. 61 and Fr. 62; and Cf. Plato, *Symp.* 189e).

The features of Empedocles's theory that can be called "modern" or forward-looking are: the gradual development of life, the succession of plant and animal life, the weeding out of imperfect forms by a sort of natural selection, and the survival of the more perfect. The teleological conception had not yet risen. Naturally, there is no real evolution in such a doctrine, as we have series of new births direct from earth which do not involve perfecting one form progressively from a previous one in any way.

Lucretius has an equally striking account of how Mother Earth produced the first races of men (V, 796 ff.):

Then . . . . did the earth first give forth races of mortal men. For much heat and moisture would then abound in the fields; and therefore, wherever a suitable spot offered, wombs would grow attached to the earth by roots, and when the warmth of the infants, flying the wet and craving the air, had opened these in the fulness of time, nature would turn to that spot the pores of the earth and constrain it to yield from its opened veins a liquid most like to milk. . . . . The earth . . . . of herself gave birth to mankind.

Many errors of nature were produced at first, (V, 837–56. I summarize the passage):

The earth then essayed to produce many monsters, things coming up with strange faces and limbs, the man-woman . . . . some things deprived

of feet, others lacking hands, ... or dumb, ... or blind, ... or with limbs so bound that they could not live. All these the earth produced in vain, so that many races of living things died out, being unable to beget and continue their breed.

Lucretius's theory, then, provides for new experiments of nature and a sort of natural selection, but no gradual development of organic life by a succession of new forms rising one out of another with better adaptations, as in the theory of Aristotle. The new animals, according to Lucretius, arise directly out of earth. This is hardly as well fitted to be regarded as pointing forward to a doctrine of descent of forms on an improving scale as is the earlier and more fantastic theory of Empedocles.

Now Spenser evidently had opportunity, by reading Empedocles, Lucretius, and Aristotle, to become acquainted with such pre-Darwinian notions as existed; and, as in at least four places he treats topics suitable for the introduction of such ideas, he might easily have displayed any "scientific" notions which he cherished. But there is no evidence that he had any clear conception of evolution of forms, or even of survival of the fittest. Spenser presents in "Mutability" two opposed views with regard to the round of animal creation, death, and birth. In VII, 18 the materialistic formula that he proposes to overthrow is stated by Mutability: the successive decomposition of forms into their substance and re-creation in new forms:

> And, being dead,
> To turne again unto their earthly slime:
> Yet, out of their decay and mortall crime,
> We daily see new creatures to arize;
> And of their Winter spring another Prime,
> Unlike in forme, and chang'd by strange disguise:
> So turne they still about, and change in restlesse wise.

Here is no progress, even physical. But Nature replies, (stanza 58) with a very brief suggestion that what seems mere change is after all, progress toward a goal.

> Being rightly wayd
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate:
> And turning to themselves at length againe,
> Doe worke their own perfection so by fate.

This is perhaps a faint glimmer of evolutionary doctrine, but by no

means derived from Lucretius. It suggests rather Aristotle,[23] who believed that a graded scale of living beings was produced by Nature. Each superior degree unites in itself the characters of the inferior degrees and adds its own peculiar, more excellent virtue. Man is distinct, having reason. Spenser also treats man as separate from the lower animals, for the same reason. The "dilating" of the being, and "working their own perfection so by fate" suggest that his treatment of progression of animal forms is based on Aristotle's doctrine; but the passage is so brief and so general that one cannot be sure whether it was based on Aristotle's doctrine in its first form or upon some later adaptation of it. In any case, it affords no evidence of any strong scientific spirit in Spenser.

Spenser's doctrine of abiogenesis might come from any one of several sources. The animals arise out of earthly slime in *Colin Clout*, 859ff., and in "Mutability," VII, 17–18. The account bears no resemblance whatever to Lucretius's, and little to Empedocles's. The clayey origins in Genesis would be as good a source as either of these.

Mr. Greenlaw sees in the emergence of forms in the Garden of Adonis, (III, vi, 37 and 38) a dependence on Lucretius in connection with the relation of form and substance:

> How closely Spenser studies even the phraseology of Lucretius is also illustrated by the passage already quoted in which he says that from the substances in chaos all things fetch their first being and borrow matter which, when it catches form and feature,
>
> Becomes a body and doth then invade
> The state of life out of the griesly shade,—
>
> on which compare
>
> At nunc seminibus quia certis quaeque creantur
> inde enascitur atque oras in luminis exit,
> materies ubi inest cuisque et corpora prima. (I, 169–71.)

The figure which Lucrétius uses for birth—*atque oras in luminis exit*—is, however, extremely common and wide-spread; if we start trailing it, we shall find that Lucretius *may* have himself taken it from Empedocles, Fragment 9,

> But when the elements have been mingled in the fashion of a man and

[23] Aristotle is teleological, and objects to views such as Empedocles's and Lucretius's which make Chance rule combinations. His criticism of Empedocles's principle of survival of the fittest is in his *Physics*, B, 8, 198b29 and his *De Part. An.* A, 1, 640 a19.

come to the light of day, or in the fashion of the race of wild beasts or plants or birds, then men say they come into being.

Nor does the thought in the rest of the Spenserian passage fix Lucretius as the source of this common figure. Spenser's statement (st. 37) is that matter comes out of chaos in the womb of the earth, while Lucretius states that everything comes from fixed seeds of its own kind; so that the context is closer to Empedocles than to Lucretius. But I, for one, should be willing to concede to either poet the power to originate that figure without any conscious indebtedness.

Another of the verbal and logical resemblances to Lucretius brought forward by Mr. Greenlaw may equally well be traced to other sources. In his article on "Spenser and Lucretius," (pp. 449–451) he three times likens Spenser as an atomist to Lucretius, saying that the falling of Lucretius's atoms into certain arrangements by chance is comparable with Spenser's emergence of living forms from the substance, particularly in the expression that beings "catch form and feature." He goes on to say, (p. 451),

That by "substaunce" Spenser meant the Lucretian atom is proved by the distinction he makes between these first-beginnings or materials of things, and the "forms" which result from combinations in this substance. The substance must "catch" form and feature before it invades the world of light. When "form" fades, the "substaunce" is not consumed but is merely altered to and fro. Spenser's statement,—

> For every substaunce is conditioned
> To chaunge her hew, and sondry formes to don,
> Meet for her temper and complexion

imitates almost verbally Lucretius, II, 1002–6,

> Et effit ut omnes Res ita convertant formas mutentque colores.

But Spenser's lines here show as close verbal resemblance to Empedocles, Fragment 71:

But, if thy assurance of these things was in any way deficient as to how, out of Water and Earth and Air and Fire mingled together, arose the *forms and colors* (εἴδη τέ χρόαι, Karsten text, no. 152) of all those mortal things that have been fitted together by Aphrodite, and so are now come into being.

And we should remember that Spenser's groundwork is the four elements, and his creative principle is Love. Lucretius's beginnings are atoms, and the creative principle, Chance producing combinations. Not by explaining Spenser's substance as the

Lucretian atom can one make it so. Nor is his "altering to and fro" the ceaseless activity of the atoms:[24] it is merely the circle of life, the wheel of being.

Spenser's treatment of substance and of form is rather general. It is as near to Aristotle's as to any other. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle places first among his fundamental principles, form, and second, matter. Form is the shaping-principle resulting in the realization or accomplishment (*entelecheia*, *energeia*, *actus*) of the possibility or potentiality inherent in the matter or substratum. It is the form-principle acting on the matter that gives rise to individual forms. This is a tenet of many later philosophers, among them certain Arabians who transmitted Aristotle to the Middle Ages. Essentially in harmony with such a doctrine is Spenser's declaration, "For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make."

Ronald B. Levinson, in an article[25] which appeared since this essay was written, traces Spenser's idea to Bruno, interpreting the passage as showing a "conception of spiritual substance." I doubt whether it shows anything more than is in Aristotle and some earlier philosophers. Mr. Levinson rightly says of the *Spaccio* of Bruno, which he quotes on p. 678, that Bruno included in his system an eternal spiritual substance together with an eternal material substance. But, however much alike they may look to a literary critic today, the "eternal spiritual substance" of Bruno and the "form-principle" of Aristotle were not in Bruno's day regarded as identical; for this was the crucial point of controversy on which Bruno lectured in the colleges for many years and on which he discoursed in print, his contention being that Aristotle's theory of the relations of form and matter made impossible the immortality of the individual soul, inasmuch as the form-principle became a sort of accident. It was to

[24] There is but one approach to atomism in Empedocles, and that is undoubtedly by an unconscious implication where, in Fragments 17 and 34, he describes the movements of the elements as "running through each other." According to Aristotle, Empedocles explained mixture as due to symmetry of the "pores." As like bodies tend to have like "pores," like bodies can mingle more readily. I have spoken of the "mixture" of elements as being taken over by Spenser in the early *Hymne of Love*, 91 ff., and elsewhere. It is possible that the need of selecting "likes" as mates expressed in the early *Hymne of Beautie*, 190 ff. may be due to Empedocles, as Fragments 22 and others in Empedocles have to do with the harmony of mating and mixing "likes."

[25] "Spenser and Bruno," *PMLA*, XLIII (1928), 679.

correct this doctrinal error that Bruno proposed his *eterna sustanza incorporea* (a somewhat difficult philosophic conception). It will not do to say with Mr. Levinson (p. 678): "Here we have to do with substance in the Platonic and Aristotelian sense, spiritual substance or form, the reality of which is implied in Spenser's description of the Garden and explicitly stated in his often quoted line, 'For soule is forme and doth the bodie make.'" The error lies: (1) in equating Bruno's spiritual substance with Aristotle's form-principle; (2) in equating Plato's and Aristotle's ideas of substance; and (3) in finding in Spenser's line the 'eternal spiritual substance' of Bruno. If Bruno's spiritual substance were Aristotle's form-principle, then Bruno would not be, as Mr. Levinson suggests, p. 679, first to find room in his system for the two substances, as they would then stand side by side as the first two principles in Aristotle's Metaphysics, and there would thus be no occasion to resort to Bruno as a source or as an explanation of Spenser's philosophy.

The postulation of such an influence to explain a combination of Platonic and Lucretian ideas by Spenser is unnecessary, for the simple reason that such Lucretian ideas as appear in Spenser are traceable to earlier systems frequently combined with the Platonic, at least in part. I have tried to eliminate from Mr. Greenlaw's list a number of supposedly Lucretian ideas. The notion of Chaos in Spenser, Mr. Levinson thinks, has been shown to be "ultimately Lucretian." If one must have the ultimate, why not go back at least four more centuries, to Anaxagoras? Spenser's Chaos in his works is a shifting, fanciful conception as much mythical as philosophic. Here are some of the things he says of Chaos: she is the mother of Earth; he is a terrorizing creature who may break his chains and bring back eternal night; and it is a dwelling-place of Demogorgon, and the home of the Fates. Why sit up of nights trailing Spenser's Chaos to one author as a source?

The resemblances which have been pointed out, at various times within the last forty years, between Bruno's *Spaccio* and Spenser's "Mutability" are not of much significance, even if the *Spaccio* were (as I think not) the earlier work. The assembly of the gods was a common literary device; Jove would naturally preside over such an assembly; and alteration or change was a very common theme of conversation in the Renaissance. Somewhat more significant is the mention by one character in *Spaccio*

of a goal of perfection at the end of change; but this was a well-known Aristotelian conception and argues no more than common debt to Aristotle or his followers. The general subject-matter, the purpose, and the tone of Bruno's ironic fable, the *Spaccio*, are quite remote from Spenser's in the "Mutability" cantos.

The points of resemblance between Spenser's philosophy and Bruno's are those in which they follow well-beaten paths; the points of difference appear wherever Bruno is independent and original. Not only is there no trace in Spenser of Bruno's peculiar beliefs on astronomy and physics, but Bruno's whole attitude toward the material world is at odds with Spenser's, as one might expect from the sharp contrast between their temperaments and personalities and general philosophies of life. As Bruno traces his belief in transmigration to Pythagoras and other ancients, and as the idea is also in Plato, there is no need to assume that Spenser got it from Bruno. And a very careful sifting of the Platonic and neo-Platonic conceptions of Bruno and of Spenser (especially in the four hymns) in comparison with similar conceptions of Ficino, Pico, and Benivieni, would probably establish what has already been suspected, that many of these conceptions were standard in Italy and in England.

Let us turn now to Spenser's attitude toward things unseen. Mr. Greenlaw argues that Spenser aims, like Lucretius, to overthrow superstition based on ignorance connected with belief in the higher powers, immortality of the soul, etc., because Mutability says to Jove ("Mutability," VII, 49): The things which we see not, how can we believe?"[26] This is unlikely: first, because Spenser is not on the side of Mutability; and second, because he himself habitually believes in things unseen. The rest of his poetry declares him to be normally inclined to the acceptance of myths, to belief in the supernatural, to mysticism in general. It is by faith in the unseen, not by the evidence of the senses, that the conclusion in "Mutability" is established.

The remark of Mutability, then, accords rather with the beginning of Empedocles's expression of his philosophical system in his poem on Nature. Fragment 2 rebukes those who will believe only what the senses tell them:

> For straitened are the powers that are spread over their bodily parts, and many are the woes that burst in on them and blunt the edge of their careful thoughts! . . . . Each is convinced of that alone which he had

[26] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 461.

chanced upon as he is hurried to and fro, and idly boasts that he has found the whole. So hardly can these things be seen by the eyes or heard by the ears of men, so hardly grasped by the mind.

That Spenser agreed with Empedocles is suggested by the proem to Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, against those who disbelieve the poet's tale because it has not been experienced. Spenser asks (st. 3):

> Why then should witlesse man so much misweene
> That nothing is, but that which he hath seene?

The next stanza goes on with the idea of Empedocles, that the senses are too blunt to report all there is to be known:

> Ne let him then admire,
> But yield his sence to be too blunt and bace
> That no'te without an hound fine footing trace.[27]

Mr. Greenlaw says that, in the Garden of Adonis, Spenser

> alters in extraordinary fashion the Platonic and Christian idea of souls coming from a spiritual realm to inhabit mortal bodies to a conception as materialistic as that of Lucretius himself. For the chief point about the entire passage in Spenser is that these souls grow in the garden of Dame Nature in precisely the same manner as the flowers and trees and all the animals. The only supernatural agencies are Nature herself, personified in much the same fashion as Lucretius, with all his denial of the supernatural in life, personifies her, and the porter, Old Genius. Even this vague supernaturalism drops out of sight in the thirty-fifth stanza, about the infinite shapes of creatures, including monsters as well as men and the animals that survived, that grow in the Garden like plants springing from the earth. With this compare Lucretius, V, 795 ff.[28]

As we have already seen (*supra*, p. 727), Mr. Greenlaw, in his denial of supernatural agencies in creation, overlooked the presence of God the Creator in the very passage he was discussing. And, except for growing in a garden, man is *not* treated by Spenser as on a par with the vegetable and lower animal life. There is a careful discrimination, in that a supernatural agent introduces a soul into him, and that soul has had pre-existence outside the garden. This difference is essential. It is one of the many points in which Spenser is absolutely at odds with Lucretius.

Genius, who introduces the soul, is certainly intended to be a supernatural agent. Spenser contrasts with him the Genius who

[27] In fragment 101, Empedocles, in connection with his discussion of the senses, uses the dog tracking by scent.

[28] "Spenser and Lucretius," *Stud. in Philol.*, XVII, 445.

is porter of Pleasure and attends Venus as goddess of Fecundity in the Garden of Acrasia. Of this lesser and lower Genius he remarks:

> They in that place him Genius did call;
> Not that celestiall powre, to whom the care
> Of life, and generation of all
> That lives, perteines in charge particulare.

It may be readily admitted that this account of how the soul got into man is not that of Genesis. For such an account one must turn to Spenser's last hymn, which has been quoted above. The whole tale in the Garden of Adonis is mythical and allegorical. It is Greek and more or less pagan; and yet it carefully includes with the pagan powers a definite recognition of God the Creator.

Proceeding with his argument that Spenser is as materialistic as Lucretius, Mr. Greenlaw (p. 459) discusses and quotes from "Mutability", VII, 18:

> All that earth produces, however fair, must decay, and being dead, must turn again into earthly slime (the first-beginnings, or substaunce) out of which new creatures arise. So also, the beasts that perish, and men who pass from youth to age and then to death,—
>
> Ne doe their bodies only flit and fly
> But eeke their minds (which they immortall call),
>
> on which it may be remarked that Lucretius's chief argument against the immortality of the soul, in his third book, is that the mind decays with the body as extreme old age comes on.

Here, as usual in treating Mutability, Mr. Greenlaw attributes to Spenser allegiance to the materialistic Mutability who is overthrown at the end of the debate—in spite of the fact that the poet in his own person expresses a hope of eternal life with God. But if Mr. Greenlaw does not notice God here, as he evidently did not in the story of creation in the Garden of Adonis, it is still hard to see how he can represent Spenser as believing that the mind dies with the body—in the face of his account of transmigration of souls in the Garden of Adonis. There is no possibility of harmonizing these contrary beliefs in the mind of a poet who is sane.

With Spenser's garden of eternal souls, existing apart from the bodies for thousands of years, compare Lucretius's teachings on the human soul. To Lucretius the mind and soul seemed one united substance, alike mortal. The soul is "fine and formed of minute bodies,"—more minute than those of water, mist, or smoke. At death the soul vanishes more easily than mist or smoke.

It "is shed abroad and perishes.". . . . "For when the body that serves for its vessel cannot hold it . . . . how can you believe that this soul can be held by any air?" (III, 418. Cf. Epic. ap. Diog. L. x. 64ff.) "The mind cannot come into being alone without the body nor exist far away from the sinews and blood. It must more strenuously be denied that it can abide out of the body." (V, 124–7).

Perhaps, however, Mr. Greenlaw does not take seriously Spenser's use of the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of souls. More orthodox views of the life of the soul apart from the body may be found at the end of "Mutability", in *An Hymne of Heavenly Love*, and in the elegy *Daphnaida*, which is within a year of the date of publication of the Garden of Adonis. Daphne says, line 268,

> The messenger is come for mee,
> That summons souls unto the bridall feast
> Of his great Lord.

She goes then to rest in the abode of the blest, free from care and woe, where saints and angels praise God eternally. Is this like Lucretius? And what of the thirty to forty lines of orthodox Christian consolation over Dido's death in the November eclogue of the *Calender*?

The two stanzas of the Garden of Adonis which present a Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of souls (III, vi, 32 and 33) have been traced by Professor Greenlaw and others to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. V, Plato's *Republic*, and Plato's *Timaeus*. I have shown elsewhere that the *Constancy* of Lipsius has pre-existent souls 'trailing clouds of glory' from a heavenly home. Any or all of these Spenser may have known, and he may also have known Pythagoras. Or, he may have derived the idea from Empedocles, as it is the fundamental idea underlying his *Purifications*. Fragment 115 presents it in part:

> There is an oracle of Necessity [an Orphic personage], an ancient ordinance of the gods, eternal and sealed fast by broad oaths, that whenever one of the daemons, whose portion is length of days, has sinfully polluted his hands with blood, or followed strife and forsworn himself, he must wander thrice three thousand years from the abodes of the blessed, being born throughout the time in all manners of mortal forms, changing one toilsome path of life for another. For the mighty Air drives him into the Sea, and the Sea spews him forth on the dry Earth; Earth tosses him into the beams of the blazing Sun, and he flings him back to the eddies of

the Air. One takes him from the other, and all reject him. One of these I now am, an exile and a wanderer from the gods.

Fragments 125 and 126 seem to continue the theme:

> From living creatures he made them dead, changing their forms.
> . . . . [The goddess] clothing them with a strange garment of flesh.

Spenser's stanzas (III, vi, 31 ff.) have the notion of an eternal decree of fate, the idea of punishment in rebirth, the long period of years between the changes of state, and the perpetual wheel of existence of the soul and rebirth in mortal shape:

> Old *Genius* the porter of them was,
> Old *Genius*, the which a double nature has.
>
> He letteth in, he letteth out to wend,
> All that to come into the world desire;
> A thousand thousand naked babes attend
> About him day and night, which doe require
> That he with fleshly weedes would them attire:
> Such as him list, such as eternall fate
> Ordained hath, he clothes with sinfull mire,
> And sendeth forth to live in mortall state,
> Till they againe returne backe by the hinder gate.
>
> After that they againe returned beene,
> They in that Gardin planted be againe;
> And grow afresh, as they had neuer seene
> Fleshly corruption, nor mortall paine.
> Some thousand yeares so doen they there remaine;
> And then of him are clad with other hew,
> Or sent into the changefull world againe,
> Till thither they returne, where first they grew:
> So like a wheele around they runne from old to new.

For the "sinfull mire" and the "fleshly corruption," Empedocles would be a good source, inasmuch as the whole aim of his *Purifications* is to show that by purifications and abstinence only can one hope to get rid of sin and escape the wheel of life, i.e., rebirth in mortal form. On the garden of souls, Mr. Greenlaw's suggestion of debt to Plato's meadow seems reasonable. Aristotle, like Plato, believed in a pre-existence. He thought a part of the soul, the *nous* (reason) was pre-existent, and entered from without (*De. gen. animal.* II. 3). Whether Spenser was influenced by Pythagoras, by Empedocles, by Ovid, by Plato, or by Aristotle, he at least was presenting a doctrine radically opposed to the position of Lucretius.

Professor Greenlaw hints that Spenser's gods are much like those of Lucretius. It is true, Spenser, like most poets of his age who were saturated with Greek mythology, has certain decorative gods and goddesses who are of no significance as deities. They appear in some poems alongside of God, the Creator, establisher and ruler of the universe. But they are not treated in at all the same way, being handled in the conventional mythical fashion of the ancient Greeks. In "Mutability", Jove, in the body of the poem, is, I believe, the same as the "great Sabbaoth God" in the poet's own remarks at the close; but he is called Jove earlier because of the myth in which he appears— of a Titaness attempting to unseat him. Let the reader who thinks Lucretius's gods are Spenser's endeavor to imagine Lucretius praying for rest in eternity with "that great Sabbaoth God." Lucretius expects his soul to 'ooze out' and perish like smoke, just as his body 'rots in noisome stench.'

Empedocles had both little gods and a big God. The little gods are no gods, in effect, for, though long-lived, they eventually perish. But the big God of the Purifications is worth a glance, for he is no anthropomorphic conception but a spiritual principle that animates the universe. Some have said he is a sun god; but in any case he is interesting in connection with a poet whose final conception of God is that Sapience is his chiefest attribute.

Fragment 133. It is not possible for us to set God before our eyes, or to lay hold of him with our hands, which is the broadest way of persuasion that leads into the heart of man.

134. For he is not furnished with a human head on his body, two branches do not sprout from his shoulders, he has no feet, no swift knees, nor hairy parts; but he is only a sacred and unutterable mind flashing through the whole world with rapid thoughts. (*R. P.* 180).

Many have felt that there was something "all wrong" with Spenser's God. Perhaps that was part (a small part) of Burghley's objection to him. In his early philosophy, the probable point of objection was the idea of Love as creator and ruler of the world. There are two aspects of this idea, even in the earlier poems; for Love is occasionally treated in a sensuous, "amatory" fashion, and at other times as a principle, not of the flesh. Throughout his life Spenser seems to have felt a need of balancing his interests in the lower and the higher forms of love. In his youth he is far less sensual than the average poet of his day, and is already aware that Love should be refined; yet he is alive to its sensuous aspects

and writes hyperbolic praise of Love as creating the world and ruling it. Even today persons may quote the scriptural texts, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is Love" (I, John 4:8), and "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God" (4:16), without meaning to assert that Love is God, or even that God is Love in any ordinary human sense. This is, perhaps, the shock that Spenser gave in his early career,—Love is God.

This is why he wished to republish the amatory hymns of his youth. It was not that they were gross in their conception of human love, for they were not; but human love had apparently been elevated to a place which only divine love should occupy. That is corrected by the addition of *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, which emphasizes God's love of the world in sending his only begotten son,—a poetical sermon on the text of I John, ch. 4. And Venus is here put down in her proper place, (lines 211–217). Her beauty cannot "once come near" that of Sapience, the "soueraine dearling of the Deity." In this the final stage of the poet's philosophy supreme Wisdom is the most significant attribute.

It may be that some persons, after reading the last two hymns, will still find Spenser lacking in his conception of God. He is not like the God of some Sunday-school children,—a benevolent old gentleman with a long white beard: nor is he like Herrick's God, one who may be praised for his "round and smooth hands" that drop gifts freely; nor does he seem to take a personal interest in seeing to it that the poet has his "beloved Beet." He does not even clap his hand on Spenser's shoulder and call him, "My child!" as does Herbert's God. He is an awe-inspiring deity who rules the universe with infinite love and infinite wisdom. The last hymns describe him, but not photographically. His face is too glorious for mortal sight, as we see in *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, lines 127–9:

> The meanes therefore which unto us is lent,
> Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
> Which he hath made in beauty excellent.

The poet when he wrote the last two hymns had his answer to what troubled him in "Mutability"—how to have absolute faith in God as creator and maintainer of the universe, and how to justify God's ways. He was now under the influence of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Christian thought.[29]

[29] In his conception of God he is a little like Empedocles and more like the stoics. The stoic God is a diety which permeates the world as a creative fire, an all-

Plato is specifically referred to in the *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, lines 82–4, where Spenser accepts the Idea rejected by Aristotle as having a separate existence. Miss Winstanley and others have so fully discussed the Platonic influence on these hymns that it is unnecessary to go into the matter here. In his physics, Spenser was much more influenced by Aristotle, but in his spiritual philosophy, it is clear that Plato dominated him.

In the *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, the passage on God's relation to the firmament might well be on the text of the nineteenth Psalm, I, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." The cosmic theory in this hymn, as in "Mutability," is essentially Ptolemaic as to its major outlines, but the particular turn of interpretation is Aristotelian. According to Aristotle, the degrees of perfections of things vary with remoteness from the direction of God; for God moves the world from its circumference (Cf. Spenser, ll. 72–5). The motion is communicated from the outer sphere to the next (Cf. Spenser, l. 74). As God acts directly on the firmament of the fixed stars (Sp., l. 67), their motion is superior to that of the planets, and the lower regions show imperfections (Sp., l. 65). These ideas of Aristotle seem to inspire the beautiful lines of the Hymn, 36–77.

Perhaps I should consider, in connection with Spenser's nature philosophy, Mr. Greenlaw's attribution to Alanus de Insulis of considerable influence on Spenser;[30] but space permits only a brief noting of the points of contact. Alanus is a mystic, who repudiates Chance. He is of a school of philosophers radically opposed to Lucretius. Mr. Greenlaw has good evidence that Spenser knew Alanus; and it is reasonable to suppose that Alanus would appeal to him. But the resemblances seem to me by no means so marked as they do to Mr. Greenlaw. Let us take his own account of *De planctu naturae:*

Disorder in the realm of man is contrasted with the harmony of the heavens, but earthly chaos has come through man's disobedience, and Nature renders judgment. . . . . Both poets represent her purpose to be to quell disorder and to rebuke the degeneracy of God's works from their first excellence. . . . . Alanus asks why she, a stranger from the skies, has sought the earth. To this the goddess replies that it is because of the transgression of the earthly sphere, the disorder in the ordering of the world, the carelessness of government, the unjustness of laws, that she

pervading breath, the soul and reason of all (Justus Lipsius, *Physiologia stoicorum*, Antwerp, 1610). Lipsius himself emphasizes wisdom as a chief attribute of God, in his *Constancy*.

[30] "Some Old Religious Cults in Spenser," *Stud. in Philol.*, XX (1923),216 ff.

has been forced to descend. Thus the argument, the scene, and the mission of the goddess are the same in both works.

But in Spenser's "Mutability," Nature comes for no such reason. She is made judge of a debate as to whether Change rules, or God. There is degeneracy of things, but this is due to Mutability, not to the sin of man (See VI, 5 and 6). Nature does not come down to rebuke man for disobedience and sin, nor does she so rebuke him. She does not complain that "God's finest work, man, has been degenerated by sensuality"—partly because constancy in "Mutability" has no relation whatever with chastity. The poem is on another subject. The *De planctu* has affinities with the House of Alma, rather than with "Mutability." The one important point of contact is that Alanus repudiates Change; but this resemblance would hardly appeal to Mr. Greenlaw who believes that Spenser lined up with Mutability.

As to the description of the goddess Nature in Alanus's *De planctu*, the resemblance seems to me general, rather than detailed. Thin garments and flowers at her feet Nature ought to have. As to the veil, for all Mr. Greenlaw's ingenuity, Alanus's Nature is *not* veiled. On the contrary, she is revealed in most elaborately detailed description. The nearest resemblance is that some say Spenser's deity was veiled because her face was *like that of a lion*. And Alanus's Nature wore a crown with one jewel in front which blazed with a form *like a lion*. The height, the veiled face, the suggestion of terror, the doubtful sex of Spenser's mysterious Nature are not accounted for in the pictorially elaborate and outright description by Alanus. The attendance of Genius upon Nature in Alanus may be significant for another poem, the Garden of Adonis passage. Also the epithet Great Mother may have been derived either from Alanus or from Lucretius,—if it is necessary to trace a source for this denomination of the earth.

Mr. Greenlaw's tracing of the pageant of the seasons and the hours, etc. to Ovid, *Met.*, Bk. 2, in his article on Spenser and Lucretius, (p. 457), seems very plausible. For the eternal flux Ovid could serve as a source, though Empedocles is more likely, on account of the other ideas taken over from Empedocles as outlined above. I see no special reason for seeking in Ovid's Pythagorean doctrine the source of Spenser's.

My main interest in this article has been to refute the conclusion that Lucretius had a dominating influence on Spenser's philosophy of life, either early or late. A few points of contact may be granted. Even if Spenser had not used the invocation to Venus, as Mr.

Greenlaw points out, one should concede an initial probability that Spenser would read and enjoy Lucretius as a poet and that the emphasis on Venus in Lucretius might appeal to Spenser in his youth. Possibly this combined with Empedocles's elevation of Love to the position of creative force to influence Spenser in his youthful hyperbolic praise of love. There may possibly be some reminiscence of Lucretius (I, 225, 229, 1131–2, and V, 828–35) in Spenser's treatment of Time as the enemy of forms (*Faerie Queene*, III, vi, 39, 40, 41), though Spenser's application of the notion is not strikingly similar to that of Lucretius. Lipsius's *Constancy* presents a closer analogue to Spenser, on the same theme. Moreover, the idea was very common in Renaissance literature, so that the establishment of a definite source is difficult.

Mr. Greenlaw's attempt to derive from Lucretius Spenser's conception of the ceaseless warfare between life and death[31] seems not very convincing. Lucretius seeks to show in the closing lines of Book II that the world is gradually growing old, wearing out,—an idea which Spenser might perhaps approve, though it is not the same as that in the Spenser passage compared, which deals with the constant succession of forms taking temporary shapes out of imperishable matter.

It may be admitted that Spenser, like Lucretius, seems to have held that things in general were growing worse. For this he was rebuked by Harvey in his letter of criticism on Mutability, and Harvey probably knew something of the tendencies of Spenser's mind. The early "ruins and downfall" poems and the proem to Book V of *The Faerie Queene* show a lack of temperamental optimism, and his attempts at a political career were not likely to brighten his spirits. Harvey opposes the recent views of Bodin to Spenser's notion of the Golden Age as being the first state. In this opinion Spenser had large company. The matter is argued in Lipsius's *Constancy*, Lipsius's conclusion being substantially that of Bodin,—that the present is the golden age. Empedocles (*Purifications*, Fragment 128) gives a view of the Golden Age, which was the age of Pythagoras, when Queen Kypris ruled and all was love and peace and harmony. Empedocles also has recurring cycles of dissolution and constant warring against Strife, the disintegrating force. But Spenser's temperament and experience may well account for his long held view that the world was growing worse, though the reference to the Golden Age as in the dim past was very common at the time.

[31] "Spenser and Lucretius," p. 453.

If the influence of Lucretius is traceable in Spenser, it is to be recognized perhaps in a similar emphasis on Venus; in a tendency to lament the changes of Time and sigh for the Golden Age; and in a contrary reaction upon his materialistic philosophy as something to be refuted, as in the discussion of the changing elements in "Mutability."

On the other hand, Lucretius is not the source of Spenser's theory of origins of things, nor of his religious convictions. The impossibility of any such dependence arises from these facts:

1. Lucretius is an atomist. Spenser starts with the elements, following Empedocles, whom Lucretius has rejected.

2. Lucretius is opposed to the principle of two-fold couplings of elements which Spenser takes from Empedocles as creative activities.

3. Lucretius has no place for such forces as Love and Strife in conflict in creation, as has Spenser, following Empedocles.

4. Aside from abiogenesis, which Empedocles has also, Spenser's notion of animal creation shows no resemblance to Lucretius's.

5. The one modern note in Lucretius, the approach to a definite doctrine of "survival of the fittest," does not appear in Spenser.

6. Lucretius's ruling force in creation is Chance. To this Spenser is opposed. Lucretius sees no design; Spenser sees a goal of perfection.

7. Lucretius denies God as creator, as divinity, and as revealed in Nature. Spenser affirms all this.

8. Lucretius denies immortality of soul, including pre-existence, after life, and ability of soul to exist apart from the body. Spenser believes in all these.

9. Lucretius has no Heaven; Spenser has.

10. Lucretius is a materialist, opposed to all that is mythical or mystical, or supernatural. Spenser revels in the ideas which Lucretius regards with disgust or contempt.

It would be difficult to find in the whole history of philosophic and scientific thought an author who held more views contrary to Spenser's than did Lucretius.

In conclusion, I would say that I do not think that Spenser was at all scientific in his tendencies, except that he had a certain interest in astronomy. On the other hand, I am disposed to give him credit for a slightly saner combination of philosophical notions than has sometimes been attributed to him.

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